YOUNG DAYS.

HELPING LESSONS (see page 35).

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SEAFARING FOLK.

BY G. NORWAY.

CHAPTER V.

POLLY'S two and fourpence halfpenny was applied to the purchase of a pair of boots, and Esther knitted some socks for her, and dressed her neatly. A few days elapsed while these preparations were being made, during which she tried to bring the wild colt into training, and teach her house-work.

Polly was sharp and clever, but as idle as possible, and so utterly untrained that the house was dirtier after her ministrations than before them. Esther's heart failed her many a time. The child broke or spoiled so much, wasted so much, hated employment so much, that it seemed hopeless ever to make her tidy and useful.

In the meantime, she fell ill. Strange as it may seem, cleanliness did not suit her; so little had she been used to baths, that she took a dreadful cold from being washed so much and having her hair cut short.

She was very ill for some days. Doubtless the exposure to the rain and fog would have done its work without the tub, but there was no question but what this had helped, and that better diet had made the girl bilious. Esther was frightened when her simple remedies were wholly unavailing to check the fever and strangling cough. She poulticed, and fomented, and dosed the little one with her best skill; and one good result came of the misfortune, for motherly Mrs. Thompson, kind-hearted, though rough and coarse, could not resist helping in illness; and the little coolness which had arisen upon Esther's resolve to follow her own course, regardless of her neighbour's advice, melted away at touch of Polly's hot hand.

Between the good-will of one and the experience of the other, the malady took a favourable turn at last, and Polly recovered.

The illness had bound her closer than ever to her good friend, and had broken her from her old life more certainly than would otherwise have been the case; this was well, and reconciled Esther to much trouble and anxiety.

When she was sufficiently restored to health, Mrs. Varcoe dressed her in her neat black clothes, and taking her by the hand, led her to the office of the firm for which Kershaw had sailed.

She asked for the chief partner, and having been kept waiting till quite out of heart, was obliged to tell her story to the manager, after all.

He went into the private office, and presently returned.

"Mr. Smith is very sorry, but he cannot help you."

"Could he not give me a recommendation to the Seamen's Orphanage, sir?"

Again the manager went to his chief, and returned.

"Mr. Smith does not subscribe to the Orphanage, and cannot help you, I am sorry to say."

"Could you tell me where to go to get a recommendation, sir? I do not know where to apply. The child is left perfectly destitute."

"Your best plan would be to go to the Asylum yourself; you would see a list of subscribers there."

"I am nearly a stranger in this town, sir; would Mr. Smith give me a paper to say who the little girl is, and how she came to be left an orphan?"

Once more did the manager enter the private office, and as he did not close the door, Esther could not but hear with what result.

"How can you let that woman persist so, Mr. Vincent? what is it to me? The man had not been any length of time in my employment. I know nothing of the people. I pay my men fair wages, and if they don't provide for their families how can I help it? If I give to one I may have a dozen here to-morrow."

Mr. Vincent returned, his colour heightened, but not so high as Esther's.

"Mr. Smith says——" he began.

"Thank you, sir," interrupted Esther; "I heard what he said; I am only sorry that I troubled you." And she took Polly's hand, and turned to go.

"Stay, my good woman," said Mr. Vincent hastily. "You say the child is very friendless; will you accept this trifle from me, and apply it

to her present needs till you can decide upon something to do for her?"

He offered half a sovereign.

"Thank you, sir," said she. "You are very kind. I have no right to refuse any help for her."

"All right, all right," said Mr. Vincent. "I wish you well."

Esther curtsied, and withdrew. Her next application was made at the Seamen's Orphanage Asylum, where her success was but little better. Her story was listened to with compassion, pronounced very sad, many questions were asked and notes made, but nothing came of all the attention which she received; and she afterwards arrived at the conclusion that either bolder applicants carried the day over her head, or, as she was seen to be respectable, and in possession of the child, other cases were considered to be in greater need of the charity which could not befriend all.

The same fortune followed her to the Blue-coat School and the Female Orphan Asylum. She had no influential friends to take up the case; she knew of no patron or subscriber to make interest for her and Polly was evidently considered to be better off than many whose friends cried out louder and more persistently. Perhaps, had Esther continued to seek help for a longer time, she might have prevailed in her turn; but her own health prevented her from doing so. She took a bad cold about Christmas-time; her cough was very distressing, and did not leave her until her little boy was born, late in February.

Polly had proved what Mrs. Thompson called "a heavy handful" to her protector all this time. It had required the greatest patience to put up with her. Esther, weak and poorly, lonely, and unfit to contend with her, had been upon the point of giving up her self-imposed task many and many a time, thinking it of no use to try and improve her. The child was affectionate, but idle, impudent, and careless. She had picked up bad words and bad habits in the streets, and recurred to them time after time.

She liked comfort, and was proud of her neat, warm clothes, but hated regular work and the steady ways necessary to maintain these desirabilities; and the cost of her keep, with all the extra expenditure entailed by her mischief and breakages, was a heavy item upon Esther's slender means.

The expenses of her confinement were greater than she reckoned upon, and the closest economy was necessary to make the two ends meet.

But with the arrival of the baby a sudden change for the better appeared in Polly. Perhaps the infant had a softening influence over her; perhaps it was the feeble health of her kind benefactress, patent even to her childish eyes; or perhaps the months of quiet training at school and in her home began to bear fruit; anyway, Polly took a turn, proved herself a good little nurse to the small Harry, of whom she became excessively fond, and practised most exemplary conduct for weeks together.

Esther felt that she was improving, and made up her mind to rub on with her for a little longer.

In May a cordial arrived for her from Calcutta, in the shape of a long, pleasant letter from Harry.

"We have made a splendid run out here," he wrote; "all is doing well, and you may look out for me about the beginning of September."

This was indeed a comfort. He must have sailed on his homeward voyage about the time when the letter arrived. Esther felt fresh heart to wait. Her own health became stronger, her baby throve, and the summer was before her.

This state of things was delightful, as long as it lasted; but alas, troubles are the lot of man, nor is woman exempt from them!

Polly went on very well as long as Esther was ill, but as she recovered became more troublesome than she had ever been before.

She played truant from school, and went begging again. With the money she obtained thus she went off upon a sea-side excursion, and took her pleasure. She told lies about what she had done, was detected, turned sullen, and would not repent.

Esther was at her wits' ends to know what to do, and seriously thought of sending her to the workhouse after all. She made the threat, and this brought Polly to her senses.

"Oh! don't send me there, don't, don't! I will be good, I will indeed!"

"Well, I will try you for a week, but if you do not behave better, I shall send you there after all."

Polly took up her household duties in a kind of frenzy, and in the ardour of good intentions cleaned the kitchen window, piling up a stool upon a chair so that she might reach the upper panes.

Lo and behold, the structure was not steady; it came down with Polly's movements, and there was, in one moment, a terrible crash, and piercing screams! The stool had fallen against the window, two panes of glass were destroyed, some crockery upon the table within, and poor Polly was lying outside, with a broken arm.

She was taken to the hospital, and the bone set, but could not be kept in the place, as there

was no vacant bed. She could only be an out-patient; and Esther had to dress and undress her, take her backwards and forwards for the surgeons to attend to her, and do all her own work as well. It was useless to think of trying to supplement her income then; it was all she could do to accomplish the necessary work of the house, and take care of the two children.

Still, she did get on and pay her way, though with difficulty.

"A little longer," thought she; "I can go on for a little longer, till Polly's arm is well again."

The fright and pain which she suffered carried off the child's naughtiness. Mrs. Thompson said it was a judgment on her for her bad behaviour, and Polly believed her. She cried bitterly, was humble, made full confession, and promised never to do so again.

"I cannot send her away now," said Esther. "This will be a lesson to her, I hope. She will behave better after this."

She had hoped to have got a little washing to do in the summer, or, at any rate, to have saved a little money when the expense of fires was lessened; but all this came in the way, and prevented her from doing so. She could do no more than make the month's pay cover the month's expenses, strive as she would.

Polly's arm was long in healing. She broke it in June, and it was September before she could use it safely.

"Harry will soon be at home now," said Esther; "I can rub on till he comes, and then he will tell me what to do."

But September passed away, and no news came of his ship. October brought the usual equinoctial gales, and many a night did the poor young wife lie sleepless on her bed, listening to the howling winds, and praying for her husband's safety.

She went to the office to inquire for the ship, and was told that it was making a rather long passage, but there was no fear.

Another week passed, and she went again, with the same result; but there was anxiety evident, and the ship was reported missing.

Terrible apprehensions gathered around the minds of all the sailors' wives. There were some of them at the office every day, and as they turned away they condoled with each other, and told dreadful stories of other losses at sea, which filled their hearts with worse dread than ever.

Day by day these apprehensions became more gloomy; the firm owned to great uneasiness, and the insurance upon the ship was increased.

It became a question of fearful interest to the sailors' wives as to how long their allotment notes would be paid. This depended upon the liberality of the firm, of which the experienced had but little hope.

November came in, with gloom and fog. On one most dreary of all its dreary days the blow finally descended. Upon going to the office for their money the women were told that the ship was given up, and that the pay was stopped.

It was hardly less severe a shock for having been so long dreaded. Some of the women made a terrible scene, screaming hysterically, and crying aloud. Mrs. Harris, wife of the third mate, was the worst; she flung herself on the ground in despair, roaring and sobbing in a frenzied way. The young men in the office gathered about her and made fun of her, like thoughtless boys as they were. There was but too much ground for suspicion that her conduct was what they called "a spirituous manifestation," and Esther felt ashamed to be in her company.

She slipped away with her stricken heart in silence, and the noisy ones went to the public-house to drown their grief.

CHAPTER VI.

But though quiet, grief would have its way, and Esther sat by her fireside, hiding her streaming eyes with her apron, and feeling as if all hope and joy and interest in life had fled from her for ever.

Polly crept up to her, put her two little arms around her good friend's waist, and laid her cheek upon her bosom.

"Don't cry, mammy," she said, "I'm so sorry; I love you; don't cry."

Esther felt comfort in the simple words, stooped and kissed the wistful little face.

Mrs. Thompson had come to sympathize; she held the baby, who fretted, and its mother took it.

"My poor boy," moaned she, "he'll never know his father."

"I don't think fathers is much account," said Polly; "they always go away and die."

"You hold your tongue, miss," said Mrs. Thompson. "There, you go along into my house and leave your mammy alone. She don't want to be moithered with the likes of you."

"I'll not leave mammy," cried the child defiantly, "I love mammy, and I'm going to stop here."

"Let her be, thank you," said Esther, "Polly means to comfort me, she's going to be a very good girl, and a real comfort."

"I will, I will," said the child, clinging caress-

ingly to her, "I promise you I will. I love you mammy dear."

This roused Esther, she wiped her eyes, and set herself to consult with her friend.

"I think that I might let half the house," said she, "very little would serve me. I might buy a small bedstead, second hand, and one or two things, so as to make shift in that empty room myself, and let the rest. Then perhaps I could get some washing or charing to do, and rub along till baby is bigger."

"Aye, and send Polly where she should always have been, and rid yourself of the keep of a useless brat like her."

Polly had gone to school before Esther would discuss her plans with Mrs. Thompson.

"I'm loath to part with her," said Esther, "she is really improving. To send her away into that rough life, where nobody cares for her, would be just to undo all I've done. Polly is one of those who will work for love, but that can't be made to do what she don't like by fear. She'd grow hard if she went to the house."

"What odds if she does?" asked Mrs. Thompson. "Folks have got to be hard if they want to make their way. How are you going to keep a great wench like that'n, eating you out of house and home?"

"I don't know," replied Esther, meekly, "but I always feel as if the Lord trusted me with Polly."

"Nonsense, girl," said Mrs. Thompson, rudely, "the Lord has sommut else to do than to go worrying after such as Polly."

"May be," said Esther. "But Mrs. Thompson, Polly has taken a turn lately, and is really likely to improve. She'll do anything in life for little Harry. Look at that sewing, and she who couldn't hold a needle a year ago. I promised her that she should make a pinny for baby as soon as she could sew well enough, and look at that!"

"It is really good sewing for her age," exclaimed Mrs. Thompson, surprised.

"And she has given up those low songs she used to sing; and I've not heard her say a bad word this long time. I told her as how baby was fresh from God, and we didn't ought to teach him what God wouldn't like, and the way she has minded is wonderful! She sings him to sleep with the things she hears at school, so prettily, and she looks quite a different girl while she is thinking of hymns and such like. I fear that she would lose it all again if she were parted from Harry."

"But Esther, how are you to feed and clothe her?"

"I don't exactly know, but the Lord will provide. I have enough for a week or two, at any rate."

Mrs. Thompson flung up her hands and went off, thinking Esther little better than a good-natured fool.

But Esther was no fool; she had counted the cost of what she was doing, and knew that Polly was better for her care, and the baby's softening influence. Her mind was made up to trust in the Lord.

"He is a Father to the fatherless, and the widow's God," thought she. "Now is my time to prove that I believe this."

She furnished her empty room, and offered her kitchen and bedroom for lodgers, after which she had but money enough to keep her family for a week or two, with the utmost economy.

No lodgers fit for her to take offered themselves for a long time. The small tradesmen's wives living about her, who knew and liked her, gave her a little charing and sewing at times, and she struggled on from hand to mouth, growing very thin, losing her pretty bloom, but existing from day to day—how, she hardly knew. Each night she laid herself down on her bed saying, "I have enough for to-morrow, Polly need not go yet;" and each day, something trifling occurred to provide for the needs of the next.

So matters went on for three or four weeks, Christmas drew near, and, a few days before, some people came and engaged the lodgings.

(*To be continued.*)

SPRING WINDS.

I HEARD the winds with unseen feet
Pass up the long and weary street;
They sang, "We come from hill and glen
To touch the brows of toiling men,
"That each may know and feel we bring
The first faint breathings of the spring,
"To sweeten lane, and street, and square,
And lighten all the dusty air.
"The hills from which we come lie bright
In something of a richer light.
"The long deep glens and woodlands lie
In softer shadows to the eye.
"The birds have caught a finer note
To throb with joy each feathered throat.
"The streamlet echoes sweet and clear
The liquid pulsings of the year;
"And everywhere you look is seen
Life dawning in a tinge of green."
Thus sang the winds as up the street
They passed with heard, but unseen, feet;
And, as they went, a cloud above
Sent downward tears of spring and love.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

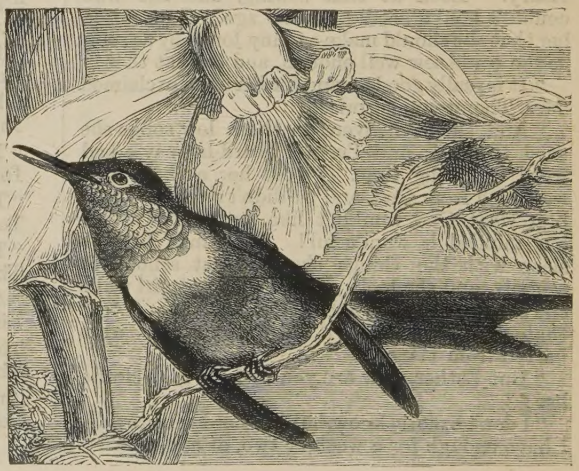
ABOUT HUMMING-BIRDS.

OF all the races of birds whose lively motions and bright colours delight the eye of man, the humming-birds are the smallest and most lovely. Many of them are so tiny as to resemble moths rather than birds as they hover before the flowers, searching for honey and the minute insects hidden within the blossoms, whilst others exceed a sparrow in size, but all of them, from the smallest to the greatest, are remarkable for the wonderful beauty of their plumage. Their feathers glow like gold or burnished copper, and shine with the changing tints of cut and polished stones. The long wings of the humming-bird, very large for the size of the owner, show that it is intended to spend much of its time in the air, and its tiny feet, too feeble to bear the bird upon the ground, are yet suited to clasp the twigs when this ever-active creature thinks to rest between its flights.

Humming-birds are found only in the New World, and are particularly abundant in South America, north of the river Amazon, Central America, and the West Indies. Naturalists are acquainted with over four hundred kinds, differing greatly from one another in form and habits. Most of them love the sunshine and seem to take delight in displaying their rich plumage to the light, but others, and amongst them some of the most beautiful, seek the deep recesses of the forest, or haunt the shady river-banks where the rays of the sun seldom penetrate, and where the trees are wrapped in almost perpetual gloom. Such a one is the glorious Crimson Topaz, a bird whose plumage is richest crimson, changing yellowish-green and deep velvety black. His tail is chestnut-brown, and the two centre feathers are very long, darker in colour, and cross one another at about half their length. He is one of the largest of the race, and according to Mr. Waterton, who met with this bird during his wanderings in Guiana, shuns the light of day and hides himself in the silent retreats of the wooded forest-streams, from which he comes forth before sunrise, and shortly after sunset, to feed upon the insects which hover about the water. Humming-birds vary greatly in the shapes of their bills; in all they are very slender, but in some, especially the sword-bills, are wonderfully long, and enable the birds to reach insects hidden deep down in the long, tubular, bell-like flowers of many tropical plants. Those of my readers who live near London, and can visit the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, will be delighted to see the splendid collection of humming-birds got together by the late Mr. John Gould, and mounted by him so as to show the ever-changing tints of the plumage, and give us some idea of the habits of these winged gems when alive. The Sword-bill, whose enormous beak almost equals the entire body in length, is represented as searching the trumpet-flowers for its insect prey. Quite as curious is the Sickle-bill, whose beak is bent just like a reaper's sickle; and the Avocets, in which it is curved upwards; whilst the Thorn-bills receive their name from the shortness of this member. Many humming-birds have their legs decorated with tufts of downy feathers like tiny powder-puffs, and are hence called Puff-legs. A bird which possesses puffs upon his legs, but also carries a remarkable tail, is the White-booted Racket-tail. The male bird has the outer feathers of his tail lengthened, and very slender for a part of their length, then suddenly widened until each ends in a broad, battledore-shaped "racket." As the bird hovers before a flower his tail is in perpetual motion, now open and then closed, whilst the rackets are continually crossed in a very graceful manner; and as these feathers are black, shaded with green, they present a brilliant sight as the active bird darts through the air. The female is without these ornaments, her tail being almost even. She is greenish-bronze above, and whitish beneath.

Humming-birds can be tamed, but do not live long in captivity.

G. H. STORER.



BASIL NORTH.

IN the long class-room of Dudley House, Dr. Maine's school, a number of boys were standing about; it was a quarter to nine, and lessons did not begin till nine, consequently they were devoting the spare fifteen minutes to eager conversation. There were about forty in the school, and six or seven day-boarders.

"I say," exclaimed a tall boy about twelve, with short-cropped fair hair, and laughing blue eyes, "I say, do you really think he let them out?"

"I am sure he did," answered a thick-set sturdy-looking boy of ten. "Father asked Harry Thorne about it this morning; and he said yesterday about five he was walking down the side path of their garden, which you know is next to our field, when he saw Basil come from the yard with the rabbits in his hands, and walk towards the end of the field. He had them by the ears, and they were kicking like anything."

"What did he do with them?" asked Frank Hughes.

"Thorne hadn't time to see, the tea bell rang and he had to go in."

"Well, he was a beastly sneak to tell the Vicar any way," cried Frank indignantly. "Here comes North, let's speak to him, and see what he says. I say, youngster," he called out to Basil, a boy with light, wavy, brown hair, and dark hazel eyes, who just then entered the room, "come here, I have something to ask you."

"Be quick about it then," said Basil, "for it's nearly nine."

"Don't be cheeky, youngster," returned Frank, as he balanced himself on the end of a desk. "What I want to know," he continued, "is how you came to let the Vicar's rabbits out?"

"*I didn't*," exclaimed Basil angrily, "who said I did?"

"Thorne."

"Oh! indeed; I suppose you and he have been having a long jaw about it?"

"No, the Vicar and he have though; Leigh was with his father at the time, weren't you?" Hughes asked, turning to his companion.

"Yes," answered Leigh, "and a jolly wax the governor was in, I can tell you."

At that moment the clock began to strike, and with a great deal of noise and clatter, the boys scrambled to their places just as the masters entered the room.

It was not till late in the afternoon that Basil had a chance of speaking to Sydney Leigh; being day-boarders, they were then preparing to go to their respective homes.

"I will walk part of the way with you, Leigh," said Basil, "I want to know exactly what Thorne told your father."

"All right, come on then, here's your hat; catch!" replied Leigh, throwing Basil's hat towards him, and seizing up his own, followed North down the steps, through the playground, and out of a small wooden door in the thick brick wall, where a porter stood letting out the day-boarders.

"Now," said Leigh, as soon as they were in the lane, "fire away, I'm all attention."

"Fire away, indeed; why, it is for *you* to fire away, not me; tell me all you know about the rabbits."

"Well, be civil then," returned Leigh. "I never knew such a peppery young chap in my life. *I* don't accuse you of making away with the brutes, remember that; in fact, I don't, and never did care tuppence about them."

"Are you going to tell me what Thorne said, or are you not?" asked Basil impatiently.

"Certainly, your honour," said Leigh, taking off his cap, and making the other a low bow. "It happened like this, your worship ——"

"Oh! Leigh," interrupted Basil, "do drop this humbug, I haven't patience to listen to such rubbish."

"All right, old chap," answered Sydney, who felt sorry for North, remembering how much he had suffered at the hands of his schoolfellows, most of whom believed him guilty, "all right, I wont chaff any more. The long and the short of it is this: the governor missed his rabbits—which you know he set great store by, goodness only knows why, I saw nothing rare about them. Well, he missed the beasts this morning, and was kicking up no end of a fuss, when in came Thorne to see if I were ready to start; on hearing what the commotion was about, he told father that he saw you take the rabbits down the field, but did not see what you did with them."

"And the Vicar believed him?"

"Yes."

"Did you?"

Leigh hesitated.

"Don't trouble to answer, I see you did, and do."

"Oh! North, I don't know what to believe; you remember I met you at half-past five last night running home as fast as you could, and you would not stop for a second."

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"Why, you know how particular you are, as a rule, about returning in time for tea."

"I went in with Thorne to look at his new tricycle; but think what you like, I am sure I

don't care," exclaimed Basil, "only never pretend to be my chum any more. Oh! I forgot, you are not likely to do that now."

"North, stop, I do believe you; I am awfully sorry, old chap," cried Leigh, as Basil overcome by all he had gone through rushed off towards home. For a short distance Sydney pursued him, but he was not a good runner, and Basil, though nearly a year younger, could at any time outstrip him easily; so at last he gave up the chase and turned in the direction of the Vicarage, feeling almost as miserable as his friend and schoolfellow.

As Basil was going to his home—a pretty old-fashioned grey-stone house, surrounded by well-kept grounds—he saw his father, Dr. North, and the Vicar of Westbrooke standing on the steps; at the sight of the latter he turned very red, and held out his hand in rather a shame-faced way. The Vicar took it, and looking at him coldly, said, "I expected to see you this morning, Basil, before you went to school, but I suppose you had no time to spare; did you call at the Vicarage as you returned?"

"No, sir," answered Basil, the colour fading from his face, and an indignant expression taking the place of the shamed one. "No, sir, I know what you mean, Sydney has just told me, but there was no reason for me to call, sir, I had nothing to tell you."

"Nothing," said the Vicar, with emphasis, "I am sorry for that, Basil; if only you had come and told me I should not have minded; think better of it, my lad, and let me see you to-morrow."

"What has Basil been doing?" asked Dr. North, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Perhaps he will tell you; I must say good-bye now, as I have to go to the almshouses before I return home."

"What was Mr. Leigh speaking to you about, what does he mean?" inquired the doctor, as he followed his son into the hall.

"He was speaking about his rabbits, they are lost, and he thinks I took them out and let them escape; and I suppose he means that I ought to go and own up to losing them. But as I didn't, I can't exactly say I did," and Basil's cheeks flushed and his eyes filled with the tears with which he had manfully battled all day long.

"Come in here, my boy, and tell me all your trouble," said his father, as he opened the library door. Basil walked across the room and threw himself on the wide old-fashioned window seat.

"Father, I cannot. That is the worst of it."

"Surely Basil you can tell me; you know my boy, how I trust you."

"Yes, father, I do. But you see I can't explain; if I said anything at all, I should let out something I don't want to."

"Oh! so it is an affair of honour?"

"Yes, quite; and I don't know what I shall do about Mr. Leigh, and the boys too; it's all over the school now, and most of them think I did take the rabbits. I feel as though I should never be happy any more."

"Do you know who took them?" asked Dr. North.

"Yes, father."

"Does anyone else?"

"No."

"And those I suppose are all the questions I may ask you?"

"Please, father."

"You must try and bear up, my boy, and perhaps it will not be long before Mr. Leigh finds out who the real culprit is."

"I am afraid he cannot do that. But, father, you won't tell him anything I have said to you, will you?"

"Of course not; though I don't think I am very much wiser than the Vicar."

At that moment Benson, the butler, entered with a telegram; the doctor took it, and hastily reading its contents, said "No answer, Benson, but tell Madox to bring the carriage round at once."

"Yes, sir."

"Where are you going, father?" asked Basil, as Benson noiselessly withdrew.

"To Oakfield."

"Oh, then you won't be back till dinner-time—what a nuisance!"

After Dr. North's departure, Basil wandered about the house disconsolately for some time, at a loss what to do with himself. He was an only child and his mother was an invalid, consequently whenever the doctor was at home Basil was invariably his companion, so he naturally objected to his father's frequent absences.

The evening was bright and warm; the trees clothed in the vivid green mantle of May looked their best; the air was sweet with the scent of lilac and hawthorn, and Basil, tempted by all these beauties, at length determined to go out He put on his hat and called to Tim his fox terrier, to accompany him. Tim bounded up from the rug, where he had been sleeping, and began jumping and barking with delight.

"Come on, old fellow," said Basil, springing down the steps and tearing along the avenue at full speed, the dog at his heels. Arriving at the

gate in a panting condition, Basil leaned against it to recover his breath, while Tim stretched himself on the ground at his little master's feet, with his tongue hanging out, his ears pricked, and his eyes bright and restless, holding himself in readiness for anything else that followed.

Presently, the sound of footsteps caused Tim to spring up, slip out under the gate, and go a little way down the road to see who was coming. Basil followed, only he went out by the gate, as it was, certainly for him, a pleasanter mode of egress.

They came upon a boy of eleven, rather tall with a round pale face, dark hair, and light blue eyes that had a habit of always looking upon the ground.

"So it is you, Thorne, is it?" cried Basil, angrily. "I am glad I've met you; where did you sneak off to after school?"

"Why, home of course, where else should I go?"

"Well, you didn't go the usual way."

"Yes, indeed, I did."

"Why I was on the look-out for you all the time."

"I can't help that."

"Thorne, you must have gone a different way."

"I tell you I didn't."

"Do you? well, it's not the first lie you've told, and I suppose it won't be the last."

"None of that, youngster," exclaimed Thorne, taking a step forward, and raising his clenched fist. "Understand I won't have any impertinence."

Basil undaunted, squared his little figure, and put himself in a posture of defence, while Tim uttered a low growl.

"Then why did you tell Mr. Leigh that I took his rabbits out, you know that's a lie."

"I never told him at all."

"Sydney said you did. He was with the vicar and heard you say so."

"Oh! he dreamt it. I said nothing of the sort."

"But Mr. Leigh spoke to me about it to-day; it's a shame that I should bear the blame, Thorne."

"Is it? I am glad you think so; I determined to pay you out for refusing to help me race the brutes. I never meant to lose them, I only did it for a lark, and if you had stopped, instead of racing off like a fire-engine, you would have seen that directly I started them, they set off in opposite directions. I chased one and nearly caught it by the willow pond, when it gave a leap and fell right in; I tried to get it out, but it was so exhausted with running that it sank almost directly. I don't know what became of the other, I could not find it anywhere, though I hunted for a long time. And now you know the whole story you can go and tell the vicar."

"I am not a sneak like you, Harry Thorne."

"No, I suppose not. Surely you don't imagine I should be such a duffer as to tell the vicar I took the beasts out? I never knew such an absurd fuss as there has been about a couple of rubbishing rabbits; one would suppose they were worth thousands."

"And what difference would their worth make?" a stern voice asked. Starting round the boys found themselves face to face with the Vicar of Westbrooke. "Would it," he continued, addressing Thorne, "make your sin any less?"

Harry made no reply, but taking off his cap, twisted it round and round in his hand.

"Answer me, sir," said Mr. Leigh. "I have heard all your conversation, so you need not attempt to tell me any more lies."

"I am very sorry," was all Thorne could find to say.

"Sorry!" echoed the vicar. "Yes, sorry that you are found out, rather than sorry for the lies you have told, and the trouble into which you have brought your companions. To-morrow I shall go to Dr. Maine, and tell him all the circumstances, and leave him to deal with you."

"Oh! don't, sir," cried Thorne; "he will expel me."

"You must bear the consequences of your fault; a boy who meanly throws the blame of his misdeeds on to another deserves to suffer. As for you, Basil," said Mr. Leigh, taking hold of North by the shoulders, "as for you, my boy, I have no words in which I can sufficiently express my opinion of your conduct. I am sorry I spoke as I did to you this afternoon; and I only hope that all through your life you may preserve your pure and noble nature. If you do, you will be a son of whom any father might be proud."

G. P.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES, PAGE 36.

1. F ram E
   R ai N
   I c E
   E xclai M
   Nagasaki
   D anc E
   S ister S

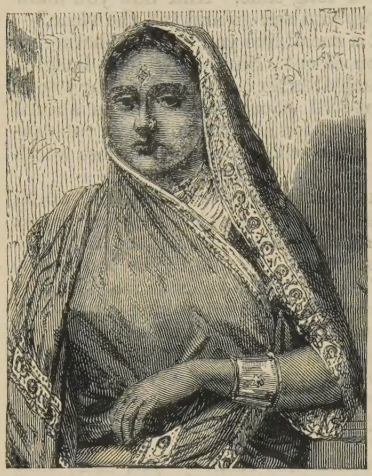
   Friends——Enemies.

2. Inch—Chin. 3. Achilles.

SCRIPTURAL BIOGRAPHY FOR MARCH.

JOSEPH—Up to his being appointed ruler by Pharaoh.

FROM JEYPORE.



I DON'T want to be rude, but I wonder whether you have ever heard of Jeypore, and if so, how much you know about the place. I merely mention this because both Ned and I were in absolute ignorance on the subject only a few weeks ago. And yet it is said to be, in its way, the finest city in India. It was built in the last century by a Rajah, Jey Singh, who removed from his ancient capital (Amber, on the hill-side a few miles off) to the new city in the plain. Above it tower fortifications, and on a steep cliff the word "Welcome," in gigantic white letters, is horribly conspicuous. This is one of the many instances of misguided tributes of respect to the Prince of Wales, who was the cause, of course unwittingly, of several barbarisms in the way of whitewash and plaster. But that has nothing to do with the great Jey Singh. He would have had better taste. He was a wonderfully clever and enlightened man, a devout Hindu and a noted astronomer, for he built observatories in Jeypore and elsewhere.

Nothing I could say would give you any idea of the life and colour of this busy city. The wide pavement is the public market, and vendors of all the necessaries and some of the superfluities of life sit there offering their goods—fruit, grain, sweets, shoes, gaudy pictures, cheap jewellery, metal ware, and clothing; while behind, in the open house fronts, artificers of all kinds, tailors, embroiderers or smiths at work, men cooking nasty-looking messes over pans of glowing ember, women grinding corn in the old Scriptural fashion, or winnowing heaps of grain. I may here remark that work which requires skill and *brains* has to be done by men. Women are useful for menial work, scouring brazen vessels, carrying things or collecting cow-dung for fuel—in short, for any occupation unworthy of the *superior* sex. (I speak as would a Hindu!) Here and there by the road-side you see a man sitting on his heels being shaved by another man upon a similar seat, or else carefully smoothing his thick blue-black hair, which he wears just long enough to touch his coat collar if he had one, or arranging his large puggaree with dexterous twists into an elaborate turban. Jolly-looking children, with large bodies and thin legs, whose clothing could not well be less, roll about like happy little porpoises, and—here comes the touch of nature that makes the whole child-world kin—make dirt pies in the gutter. As far as we have seen, children are treated with the greatest kindness in India. It is a rare thing to hear one cry, and not once have I seen a child struck or cuffed.

Cows and oxen, their dew-lapped throats encircled with strings of cowries or coloured beads, roam about at large; hump-backed bullocks of various sizes draw funny little carriages, which sometimes are shrouded completely with a tent-like covering when some "Purdah woman," or lady of a caste too exalted for vulgar eyes, is taking a drive. Rajput horsemen clatter about looking very warlike; camels stand motionless, like untidy, stuffed animals, with the expression of supercilious resignation which has earned them a reputation for patience, or jog along on their padded feet beneath heavy loads; and, most impressive of all, a big elephant comes along now and then with its ponderous, sidling walk, and noiseless footfall. In the dusk it is startling to look up suddenly and see one of these huge creatures looming ever so high above you.

These elephants belong to the Rajah, who owns about a hundred, and of these several are kept for the use of visitors who wish to visit the deserted city of Amber. I find that I shall not be able to tell you to-night how we rode one of these giant beasts; it is too late. I must tell you, though, that we went to see their stable this afternoon. It is like a large farm-yard, surrounded by strongly-fenced enclosures, and the huge creatures were lumbering about taking their evening drink. Some were chained by the leg in their own homes, and the biggest of these was a celebrated fighter, having lost one tusk in a duel; the other tusk is tipped with gold. There are tigers from the neighbouring jungle, imprisoned for the crime of *man-eating*. There is something awful in a caged wild beast, and I jumped back a few paces when the tiger that had eaten fifteen men, and thriven on the diet, bounded against the bars with a terrible roar. I know his mouth watered at the sight of the nice, plump English-woman.—*A Lady's Letter.*

HAROLD'S STORY.

PART I.

HAT winter was something like a winter, I can tell you! We had deep snow for quite six weeks after Christmas. There was ice everywhere, too; but you couldn't manage much first-rate skating because the snow froze into great lumps upon it, and tripped up the best skaters in no time. Still those holidays were very jolly on the whole, though we didn't have the usual large party of young cousins in the house which made our Christmas so delightful generally. You see, as a rule, there were only we three, Gran, Dora, and myself. And—well, living in the Fen country too, as we did, was not exactly what most people would have called cheerful, especially in the winter, when no birds or butterflies were left; just wastes and wastes of "rounding grey," with even the gaunt skeletons of trees, that stand out against the far horizon like so many gibbets, all swallowed up in one huge sea of white.

Our house stood away from the village by about a mile and a half, and was surrounded by nothing but endless meadows. Lonely? Yes, I suppose so. But children don't trouble their heads much about that as long as they are children. Dora was thirteen. I, Harold, a year younger. Though, of course, that did not signify, because boys are always older than girls, and whether their years are or not makes no difference whatever. She was a jolly girl, with a shock of yellow curls like mine, and bright keen grey eyes. Clever enough, too, and used to help me with the lessons for my tutor of an evening (when her daily governess had packed off), like the brick she really was. There had been a grand talk before Christmas as to what particular guests should be invited. I wanted my special chums, and Dora hers.

"Gran, dear, do let the Grahams come!" she pleaded. "I've not seen Agnes and Lily for ages —not since last summer year. And I know they want to be asked."

"Of course I may invite the Murray fellows, as usual, Gran?" I added confidently. "You know you like to have them always, don't you?"

"Now, children, listen to me," Gran began. "Dora, love, I am sorry to disappoint you of your friends, but have you forgotten little Maude White? She has no home to go to at all, and her first Christmas holidays in England must not be spent at school while we have a roof to offer her."

"Oh, Gran! she's not a relation," and Miss Dora tossed her short curls disdainfully. "Can't she stay where she is? Tiresome thing!"

"No, not a relation certainly," Gran said quietly. "But the child of one who was a dear friend of mine, and whose death I shall never cease to grieve over. Her father in Africa (think what a distance off, Dora!) has asked me to show kindness to poor Maude, and is not this the way in which we can do so? Harold, my boy, you can have George Murray. But I think two visitors will be sufficient on this occasion. We must try and have the Grahams at another time."

"Horrid little prig Maude is, I know," Dora began, with a pout. "Indian children are unbearable."

"My dear Dora, I hope you will remember to treat her courteously, and as your and my guest," Gran interrupted rather severely; and Dora had to accept the fiat with the best grace she could. She finished her complaints in private however, the first moment we were alone. "How stupid it will be," she sighed. "It's all very well for you, sir, who have got what you want. I should have been quite satisfied even if both the Murray boys had come, and nobody else. But I hate all girls in the world (except Lily and Agnes), they are so silly and commonplace as a rule."

"Yourself into the bargain, of course?" I said, giving her hair a warning pull. "Come now, I must say you are hard on that poor little mortal. You haven't seen her, and you can't judge without, it stands to reason."

"Oh yes, Rolly! You know you like every girl under the sun! It wouldn't matter whether she was a statue or an ape. Very well; you can entertain Maude then, and I'll take George under my wing."

It was an awful cram. But Dora threw that in my face whenever she chose to shirk her own responsibilities. Well, grumbles or no grumbles, Maude White was invited, and accepted in a prim stiff note that might have been written by a poker as easily as not; and on Christmas Eve young Maude arrived. I met her at the station, and, oddly enough, she was precisely like what I had expected. A small pale child, with black hair turned off the broadest of foreheads, and the biggest and gravest of black eyes. She was very quiet all the drive home, and shivered when she saw the far-stretching fens and their mantle of pure rippling snow.

"How different from Cape Town, and Brighton!" she murmured half to herself. Then with more interest. "Haven't you got a sister? Where is she?"

"Dora? Oh, yes; she has a cold, and couldn't come."

It was rather awkward, because I knew Dora had traded on that cold to avoid meeting our one visitor. Still Maude could hardly guess the truth, you would have thought, yet her next question was startling. "Did she send her love instead?"

I laughed outright. "Oh, Dora isn't that sort at all. She is the nicest, jolliest girl you can think of, but she is more like a boy than a girl. I call her my brother, you know."

"Oh!" a pause of doubtful consideration. "Will she like me, do you suppose? *I* am not a boy!"

"Yes, rather!" I said, all in a hurry, and felt myself turning horridly red. "I'll make her, if she don't. And, at any rate, I'll stand by you through thick and thin."

"I see what you mean. Dora does not care for me, and wishes I hadn't come. It's kind of you to say that, but I don't care for boys, as a rule." Which calm statement of facts astonished me so much that my tongue was paralysed until we had reached our own door, where Gran stood waiting ready to give Maude the warmest of welcomes. Dora lingered reluctantly behind, and presented her cheek frigidly to be kissed. Young Maude first glanced at Dora, then refused the cheek and held out her hand. "How do you do? I don't kiss people with colds, thank you."

Ah, ah! Miss D. had met her match for once.

Well, time went on: but though nobody could have been kinder than Gran, yet for the first few weeks Maude made nothing but the barest responses. I must say she was not what you might call a pleasant visitor. Do what I would (George Murray was ill, and never turned up), she wouldn't thaw the least bit to anyone but Gran, and Dora's spasmodic efforts at friendship (at distant periods!) met with very little better result. That child was as sharp as you please. She pined in a way for Dora's sympathy, yet she was too proud to accept what wasn't genuine. As for Dora, she repeatedly declared that it was impossible to get on with Maude White, and she wished to goodness her holidays would end as quick as they could. I always believe Maude heard that sweet little speech (by accident, of course). We broke off abruptly on her sudden entrance into the room, and began talking about parties (!), but she was stiffer than ever afterwards, until I voted secretly that a downright shaking would do her quarts of good, and really should rather have enjoyed administering it myself. For you must not conclude that I was an angel just now, by any means. Maude made me angry by her obstinacy and moping ways, and constant allusion to Cape Town and "Father." She despised "boys," did she? and spurned their small advances? Very well! It showed her bad taste, that was all. And as the American Eagle chose to solace itself in that way, "we let it went." FLORENCE UPTON.

(*To be continued.*)

PUZZLE BAG.

A DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

I.

1. My *first* may guard and beautify the picture of a king.
2. My *next* on summer holiday a most provoking thing.
3. But oh! when Christmas comes each boy is anxious for my *third*;
4. And joyfully, when it is strong, to do my *fourth* is heard.
5. My *fifth* you'll have to look for in the island of Japan,
   The only port once open there to European man.
6. My *sixth*, a pleasant pastime in the winter ev'ning gay,
7. When my *seventh* at the piano kindly take their turn to play.

And now be grave and steady. The initial letters take,
They tell what God has blessed us with, and bid us for their sake
Be diligent and kind and good, and ever bear in mind,
That what the finals show too oft attend on human-kind.
If to our lot the finals fall, remember, every day,
For one as for the other 'tis our duty still to pray.

II.

Part of a lifeless foot if you transpose,
The answer's found at once beneath your nose.

III.

A letter from each name gives a Greek hero—Apollo, Lucretia, Hector, Priam, Ulysses, Solon, Homer, Paris.